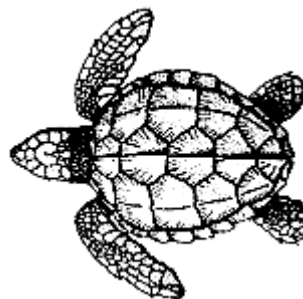


The Loggerhead

Southeast Asia/Pacific Regional Environment and Health News

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ASEAN-WEN Holds First International Executive Seminar and Meeting

The newly formed Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Law Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) held its first international executive seminar and meeting May 22-25 in Bangkok with full sponsorship from the USG. Member nations sent delegations composed of senior officials from customs, police and CITES management authority agencies. Two large consumer states, China and the United States, also sent delegations to lend technical expertise and to learn from the experience of member states.

Delegations adopted Terms of Reference for ASEAN-WEN, began establishing inter-agency national task forces that will form the structure of the network, nominated national focal points and contact points within each agency to enable coordinated communication, and identified requirements for improving national and cross-border wildlife crime suppression efforts. The meeting was funded as part of a long-term grant from USAID to the NGOs WildAid and TRAFFIC in support of ASEAN-WEN, and included participation by USAID, the Department of State's OES Bureau, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Director of the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Bangkok. The Department of State's Regional Environmental Office in Bangkok has supported ASEAN-WEN since its conception during preparations for CITES CoP13 in 2004, and is proud to be partnering with USAID, WildAid and TRAFFIC to continue this support as ASEAN-WEN becomes a functioning law enforcement tool.

Trafficked Orangutans to Return Home

In its first large-scale coordination effort between member states, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Law Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN) facilitated international coordination efforts between Thailand and Indonesia to return 54 orangutans from Thailand to

Borneo. Thai authorities confiscated the great apes two years ago from Safari World, a private for-profit zoo near Bangkok. With technical assistance from NGOs WildAid and the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation, officials from the two ASEAN-WEN member nations agreed on April 21 to a general plan under CITES Article 8 (4) for returning the orangutans to Borneo. The animals will undergo medical screening for tuberculosis and hepatitis before being transported via airplane to a repatriation center in Indonesia. Repatriation is expected to take place during the month of June.

Avian Influenza: APEC Ministerial and USG Implementation Plan

On May 5, APEC Ministers concluded a two-day meeting in Da Nang, Viet Nam, and adopted an action plan that will strengthen the ability of member economies to detect and respond to outbreaks of avian influenza in the Asia-Pacific region. Ministers formally endorsed the APEC Action Plan on the Prevention and Response to Avian and Influenza Pandemics (PDF, 5 pages), which covers five subject areas and specifies requirements that will be implemented at a domestic level by APEC member economies.

The five areas covered by the Action Plan are:

- Multi-sectoral cooperation and coordination on avian and pandemic influenza
- Establishing best practices and common approaches to risk communications
- Mitigating negative effects of avian influenza on agriculture and trade
- Working with the private sector to help ensure continuity of business, trade and essential services
- Strengthening regional and international cooperation.

Just two days prior, on May 3, the USG released the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza (PDF, 234 pages). The plan translates the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza (PDF, 17 pages), released last November, into more than 300 actions for Federal departments and agencies and sets expectations for state and local governments.

In November 2005, the White House submitted a \$7.1 billion emergency budget supplemental request to Congress for pandemic preparedness funding to invest in international health surveillance and containment efforts, medical stockpiles, the domestic capacity to produce emergency supplies of pandemic vaccine and antiviral medications, and preparedness at all levels of government. On December 30, President Bush signed legislation that includes \$3.8 billion to launch these programs. The President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2007 includes a \$2.3 billion request.

On May 4, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt announced the award of more than \$1 billion to five pharmaceutical companies to accelerate development of influenza vaccine technologies. Leavitt said the goal of the funding is to have the ability in the United States, within three to five years, to manufacture 300 million courses of pandemic flu vaccine within six months of a pandemic declaration.

Burma's First Avian Influenza Outbreaks

Burma suffered a series of avian influenza outbreaks in poultry beginning in early March, the first time the H5N1 avian influenza virus has been detected in and reported from Burma. More than 250 chicken and quail farms in Mandalay and Sagaing provinces were affected in 11 separate outbreaks. The government quickly welcomed an assessment team composed of World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and USAID experts and provided complete access to the affected area. Response and control measures included culling, disinfection of infected farms, movement controls, and an intensive public awareness effort that included messages via television, radio, newspapers, pamphlets, and posters. USAID purchased 200 personal protective equipment packs, 500 liters of disinfectant concentrate, and 50 backpack

sprayers for use in the control operations. In addition to the USAID assistance, the Thailand Ministry of Public Health–U.S. CDC Collaboration's International Emerging Infections Program (TUC-IEIP) dispatched a Thai epidemiologist to provide short-term assistance to strengthen WHO/Burmese health surveillance procedures. At first, the culling of birds was restricted to affected farms, but when outbreaks continued to spread, the government expanded culling operations to include all birds within one kilometer of an affected farm or household. In all, more than 300,000 chickens, 300,000 quail, and comparable numbers of eggs were destroyed, but the expanded culling appears to have been effective – no new outbreaks have been reported since April 5.

New Special Representative for Avian and Pandemic Influenza

The head of the United States delegation to the Da Nang APEC avian influenza ministerial meeting was newly appointed Special Representative for Avian and Pandemic Influenza Ambassador John Lange. Ambassador Lange is directing the work of the newly created Avian Influenza Action Group at the U.S. Department of State, which is now leading the Department's work on developing an international engagement strategy based on preparedness, prevention, and containment. In close collaboration with the Departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Homeland Security, Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development and other agencies, as well as the State Department Bureau for Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, the Avian Influenza Action Group will be involved in efforts to engage political leadership in affected nations through bilateral interactions and multilateral forums, strengthen transparency and international cooperation, improve surveillance and laboratory capacity, strengthen coordination between human and animal health sectors, and develop coordination of preparedness, prevention, and containment efforts among concerned countries.

CDC Supports AI Training for Southeast Asia

The Thailand MOPH–U.S. CDC Collaboration's International Emerging Infections Program (TUC-IEIP) will provide critically needed influenza virus detection training for laboratory staff members from Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia during three one-week sessions in 2006. With full sponsorship by TUC-IEIP, public health leadership from each country will send skilled laboratory personnel to learn techniques to identify potential pandemic influenza by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and rapid immunological tests.

The workshops, held in Bangkok between April and September 2006, will be led by senior laboratory and technical staff from CDC, Thailand MOPH, AFRIMS, and NAMRU-2. Building laboratory capacity in Southeast Asia will enhance the effectiveness of national surveillance and response plans and allow faster international reaction should a dangerous mutation be detected. Additionally, connections made between workshop participants will facilitate information sharing between regional laboratories.

TUC-IEIP, in collaboration with WHO and regional ministries of health, is also leading the development of a one-week rapid response training course to provide pandemic influenza identification and containment training for public health practitioners in Southeast Asia and other affected regions. The 40-hour intensive curriculum will be taught first on a "train the trainers" basis in July in Bangkok. Training will focus on clinical presentation of influenza, epidemiological investigation of outbreaks of respiratory pathogens, outbreak containment, mechanisms for early notification of global health authorities, specimen handling, shipment and testing, antiviral treatment, vaccination, use of personal protective equipment, establishing quarantine, and dealing with the media.

The Ministry of Health from each country will designate five-person teams to participate in the courses. Upon completion, rapid response teams will be equipped to initiate an outbreak investigation and support the first 72 hours of a response. Teams will also be provided course

materials to replicate the training in their provinces. To improve regional communication and preparedness, contact information for every participant will be collected and a database of participants established.

USNS Mercy Returns to Southeast Asia

The U.S. Navy hospital ship USNS Mercy is on a five-month tour the Pacific to provide free medical and dental care in coordination with host governments and local relief organizations. In January 2005, Mercy was dispatched to Southeast Asia where its unique capabilities served the victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami. The U.S. Pacific Fleet reports that Mercy's crew performed more than 19,000 medical procedures and treated more than 9,500 patients in Indonesia, East Timor and Papua New Guinea following that disaster. Mercy's first stop is the Philippines.

Upcoming Events

- World Environment Day, June 5 www.unep.org/wed/2006/english
 - International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza Senior Officials Meeting, Vienna, June 6-7
 - 4th ASEAN Experts Group on CITES, Makati City, Philippines, June 14-16
www.cites.org/common/news/2006/4th_ASEAN_EXP_GRP_2.pdf
 - 1st Asia Pacific Coral Reef Symposium, Hong Kong SAR, June 18-24
www.cuhk.edu.hk/bio/APCRS/index.htm
 - 2006 ASAIHL Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, Penang, June 19-22
<http://eis.usm.my/asaihl>
 - Coral Reef Ecosystems Biodiversity Forum, Noumea, New Caledonia, October 30 - November 4
www.ird.nc/biodec
 - East Asian Seas Congress, Haikou, China, December 12-16 www.pemsea.org/eascongress
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